# ECHO OF MYTHS IN CONTEMPORARY INDIAN FICTION IN ENGLISH

A

**Synopsis**

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In the present study the selected works of four writers from the Indian subcontinent namely Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* (2008), *The Forest of Enchantments* (2019); Kavita Kané's *Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen* (2013), *Sita's Sister* (2014); Anand Neelakantan's *Asura: Tale of the Vanquished* (2012), *Ajaya I: Roll of the Dice* (2013), *Ajaya II: Rise of Kali* (2015); and Aditya Iyengar's *The Thirteenth Day: A Story of the Kurukshetra War* (2015) and *Bhumika: A Story of Sita* (2019) have been chosen in order to analyse the retellings of myths as well as their relevance in the contemporary times.

Myths have always fascinated the creative mind of writers and challenged their creative faculty. This preoccupation with myth – whether to create a new one or to reconstruct the old – can be gauged by understanding the relation between the authorial intent behind myths and their functionality as cultural documents within a continually shifting societal reality. In creating a new myth, an author puts his/her own intention to work through the myth visualised, whereas in the case of reconstruction of extant myths, the palpable functions embodied within the original myths are questioned, challenged, substituted, negated, reversed or refocused. Mircea Eliade, in *Myth and Reality*, describes myth as:

> a sacred history; it relates an event that took place in primordial Time, the fable time of the beginnings. In other words, myth tells how, through the deeds of Supernatural Beings, a reality came into existence, be it the whole of reality, the Cosmos, or only a fragment of reality … Myth, then, is always an account of a 'creation'; it relates how something was produced, began to be. Myth tells only of that which *really* happened, which manifested itself completely. (5-6)

To emphasise the social value of myth Bronislaw Malinowski, a social anthropologist, proposed that myth for him was neither explanatory nor etiological. He suggested that myth:

> … is not symbolic, but a direct expression of its subject matter; it is not an explanation in satisfaction of a scientific interest, but a narrative resurrection of a primeval reality, told in satisfaction of deep religious wants, moral cravings, social submissions, assertions, even practical requirements. Myth fulfils in primitive culture an indispensable function: it expresses, enhances, and codifies belief; it safeguards and enforces practical rules for the guidance of man. (101)

Therefore, he concludes that a myth should not be treated as an explanation or as a symbol but rather in terms of how it motivates people and shapes their lives and realities. Rather than a factual description, it is a plan, a model, or in Malinowski's language, a "pragmatic charter" or guideline for life (101). The events in myths are not events at all but rather ideal or typical situations – situations that did not happen just once ages ago but that happen continuously. Accordingly, myth or mythology is not and should not be confined to the early stages of a civilization; in fact, it remains visible even in the contemporary reality in the form of folktales and retellings. Aleksei Semenenko in *The Texture of Culture* mentions that myths do not "belong exclusively to the past and archaic cultures but constitute an intrinsic part of modern culture as well" (40). Because of their universal nature, the definitions of myth have become vague and ambiguous throughout the ages. Joseph Dorairaj in *Myth and Literature* states:

> Myths are uncanny phenomena. They are at once regional and yet universal; static and yet dynamic; stable and yet protean; archaic and yet contemporary; profligate and yet hallowed; fantastic and yet highly structured; divine and yet human in that they are as much about gods and goddesses as about human beings. Though they belong to a pre-literate pre-historical era, they keep recurring in all ages and are part of our contemporary society. Though they belong to the realm of primitive religion and come under the purview of anthropologist, folklorists, and phenomenologist of religion, they are an integral part of literature and other arts. (09)

However, M. H. Abrams in *A Glossary of Literary Terms* provides a comprehensive definition of myth that is quite popular even today:

> … one story in a **mythology** – a system of hereditary stories which were once believed to be true by a particular cultural group, and which served to explain (in terms of the intentions and actions of supernatural beings) why the world is as it is and things happen as they do, and to establish the rationale for social customs and observances and the sanctions for the rules by which men conduct their lives. (106)

The study of mythological belief was initially sceptical and critical, although Plato, while demolishing the ancient Greek mythology, declared that the philosopher would have to invent other

truer myths to take its place and tried to provide the same in *Timaeus*, *Phaedo*, and *The Symposium*. Euhemerus, a Sicilian philosopher, argued that many mythological tales can be attributed to historical persons and events, the accounts of which have become altered and exaggerated over time. Muller in *Prolegomena zu einer wissenschaftlichen Mythologie* ("Prolegomena to a Scientific Mythology" – 1825) paved the way for the scientific investigation of Greek myths – their origin and existence in any civilization.

The late nineteenth century saw the development of the comparison and elucidation of world mythologies. Scottish historian and folklore scholar Andrew Lang, author of *Myth, Ritual, and Religion* (1887), and James Frazer in his pioneering study *The Golden Bough* (1890) dealing with the origins of religion and sociology interpreted mythology in terms of savage life and experience. In 1931, the German ethnologist Wilhelm Schmidt reviewed various theories that account for the origin of religion and its mythology in his *Ursprung del' Gottesidee* (*Origin and Growth of Religion*). A characteristic twentieth century interest has been to view mythology within a philosophy of symbolic forms, or as exemplifying a structured system of values and significations. Frazer's profound influence on the imagery of modern poetry is very significant. His dying God myth, king of the woods myth, fertility myths found in most of the poems indicate how man's mind keeps grappling with the mysteries of the world, especially, death and life after death. These images are "archetypes" (Frye 99) and reveal a variety of contemporary approaches into the inherited past, trying to transcend the immediate time searching for order and meaning in this life. This is why Northrop Frye was of the view that certain forms of myths become the conventions and genres of literature.

As myths are the driving force behind religious beliefs, they indirectly govern the attitudes of people in a society. In every age, when poets become thinkers and watch with consternation the progress of science, man's increasing alienation from nature and worry about the fate of the faithless man, their desire creates literary themes out of myth. Homer, Edmund Spenser, Percy Bysshe Shelly, John Keats created immortal works employing various myths. Dante and Milton created epics to manifest their faith in Christianity. Similarly, myths have been used by several novelists like James Joyce and Chinua Achebe, portraying the social and political conditions of their age in their respective

works. James Joyce, in *Ulysses*, recreates the mythical Homeric Odysseus into the modern Leopold Bloom and narrates his mundane, sordid existence in an ironic manner.

In the twentieth century, J. R. R. Tolkien published *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (1954-55) that have been drawn from the Scandinavian mythology, where Tolkien named his dwarfs after mythological characters, thus making a significant contribution to the world literature. Another novelist, Margaret Atwood, renders modern interpretations to ancient myths, as reflected in her work *The Penelopiad* that retells the woes of a young and newly married Penelope, a character drawn from the Greek mythology. Some myths have also been adapted into comics, TV series and films, serving a dual purpose – that of moralizing as well as entertaining.

Drama, as compared to poetry and fiction, is a more socially oriented form of literature as it is generally created to be performed for masses than for individual appreciation. Dramatists have been making use of myths time and again; for instance, William Shakespeare in *Troilus and Cressida* chose certain characters from the Greek epic, the *Iliad.* Samuel Beckett, an Irish dramatist, produced an absurdist drama called *Waiting for Godot*; this play is known to have stemmed from the philosophy given by Albert Camus through the famous Greek myth of Sisyphus. In the early modern period of America, Eugene O'Neill and Tennessee Williams created dramas based on myths or made an oblique reference to them in *Mourning Becomes Electra* and *Orpheus Descending*, respectively. In France, Jean-Paul Sartre and Jean Anouilh made use of myths, in *The Flies* and *Antigone* respectively, to depict the contemporary situation during the World War II time. Thus, myths have been largely employed to depict every social, political and cultural transition.

While the Western artists have drawn inspiration from the *Bible* and various Greek and Roman myths found in Homer's epics – the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, in India religious and ethical codes of conduct owe their origin to the *Vedas*, epics – *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*; *Upanishads*, *Aranyakas*, *Smrtis* and *Shrutis*, etc. The sages and seers of India attached importance to every aspect of human life – mental, physical and spiritual, and provided the guidance for the proper development of the same.

In the context of Indian literature in English, many creative artists have made an extensive use of myths in their works and the two great epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, emerge as the main source of mythological themes, corroborated by Devdutt Pattanaik's statement in a famous talk-

show *Devlok* that most local mythologies and folk narratives have been known to have their roots in these two epics. In the Canacona region of Goa, a local version of the *Ramayana*, called *Gadya Ramayana*, is narrated during harvest festivals and folk performances (Phaldesai). The plots, sub-plots, themes which can be drawn from these epics make them stand out from every other mythological series in ancient Indian literature. In fact, Indian literature is replete with several mythological characters and their portrayal has also been one that bears relevance to the contemporary Indian society.

Indian drama in English makes extensive use of myths, legends and folktales evidenced by Girish Karnad's plays where he has time and again returned to eternal roots of his cultural tradition, taking inspiration from mythology and folklore. *Hayavadana* is based on Thomas Mann's translation of the Sanskrit *Vetal Panchavimashati*, which forms part of Kshemendra's *Brihat Katha Manjari* and Somadeva's *Kathasaritsagara*. Karnad's *Nagamandala* is inspired by the snake myths prevalent in South India. In the realm of poetry A. K. Ramanujan stands out as a unique figure for his substantial contribution to its growth and development incorporating different folklores and myths in his works. During the freedom struggle, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi often made references to the ancient manuscript of *Bhagavad Gita* for national purpose.

Writers like Raja Rao, R. K. Narayan and Shashi Tharoor have made extensive use of Indian mythology, employing it in different contexts by way of retelling and revising them for their own specific literary purpose. Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* is also a great example of mythical adaptation as the Gandhian revolution is described in terms of Ram (Gandhi) leading his army to rescue Sita. Similarly, R.K. Narayan has employed mythical themes in his different creations and wrote various versions of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. R. K. Narayan explicated the ideology of *dharma* of Hindu religion in mythopoeic terms. Narayan's fictional world of Malgudi presents a vivid and realistic picture of South India but the characters and situations bear the stamp of Indian mythology, in that the myth of Bhasmasura, the self-destroying demon, has been used very creatively in *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* by Narayan.

Indian writers have assigned different perspectives, meanings, and connotations to the traditional myths by making use of archetypes of legendary heroes, symbols, character types and

themes. Ever since the myths have been presented in myriad forms in different interpretations, keen interest has been generated in analysing modern retellings and versions of the primitive myths. Generally seen as "a traditional story originating in a preliterate society, dealing with supernatural beings, ancestors, or heroes that serve as primordial types in a primitive view of the world" ("Myth" 742), myth is also "a real or fictional story, [with] recurring theme, or character type that appeals to the consciousness of people by embodying its cultural ideals or by giving expression to deep, commonly felt emotions" ("Myth" 742). It is in this latter sense that myths continue to inspire and stoke the contemporary writer's creative impulse posing for him/her the challenge of analysing, questioning, countering or subverting the apparent and/or concealed ideology by retelling or revisioning the myths in question.

The concept of retelling or rewriting has emerged as a postmodern technique and has been extensively used in literature and other forms of art. Christian Moraru, in his book *Rewriting: Postmodern Narrative and Cultural Critique in the Age of Cloning,* insists that, "Whenever I use the term retelling as an equivalent of rewriting, I mean a precise, detailed, deliberate, and ideologically driven retelling of former written narratives" (17). Further, he defines rewriting as:

> an intertextual form that entails a strong tie to chronologically prior works, the trace of which is discernible in the text and is marked by the author as an intentional presence rather than as an elusive, faint echo. This rewriting is usually – and strikingly – *there* in various degrees of obviousness and thus relates to self-referential/self-reflexive literature in general and metafiction in particular. (19)

This notion of retelling grand and ancient narratives emerged as a technique of revising old texts and presenting them in a manner suited to the contemporary mindset. However, the writers of these retellings do not aim at questioning the values reflected in the ancient texts; instead, they serve the purpose of revisioning or reconstructing the narrative in such a manner that this retelling provides answers to certain pertinent questions that have engaged the mind of the readers since forever. For instance, contemporary retellings attempt a version of feminist revisionist mythology that aims at a strategic use of gender imagery to transform culture and subvert the tradition that women inherit. Devdutt Pattanaik's *Sita: An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana*, Moyna Chitrakar and Samhita Arni's

*Sita's Ramayana* explore Ramayana from Sita's perspective. Sujoy Ghosh's *Ahalya* (inverting the story of Sage Gautama's wife), *The Palace of Illusions* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni (revisiting the *Mahabharata* from the perspective of Draupadi) and Kavita Kané's *Karna's Wife: The Outcast Queen* are a few examples that weave in threads of sexuality and feminism in the fabric of myths.

Attempts to subvert the codified concept of morality and the notions of evil and good have also been made in the books namely *Asura: Tale of the Vanquished* and the *Ajaya* series by Anand Neelakantan, *Duryodhana* by V. Raghunathan, *The Difficulty of Being Good: On the Subtle Art of Dharma* by Gurucharan Das that attempt to raise important issues of morality from different perspectives. Presented from the perspective of the villains of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, these books aim at reformulating the notions of *dharma* that dominate Hindu ethics. Books like Devdutt Pattanaik's *Shikandi and Other Tales They Don't Tell You* and *The Pregnant King* attempt at retelling the narratives from the perspective of the marginalized voices in the epics. Though the four writers chosen for this study namely Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Kavita Kané, Anand Neelakantan, and Aditya Iyengar draw inspiration from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, their variegated voices and perspectives infuse variety and interest in their works.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni (1956- ), an Indian-American author and poet, was born in Kolkata, India. She received her BA from the University of Calcutta in 1976. That same year, she went to the United States to attend Wright State University where she received a master's degree. She received a PhD in English from the University of California, Berkeley in 1985. Divakaruni's work has been published in over fifty magazines, including *The Atlantic Monthly* and *The New Yorker* and her writing has been included in over fifty anthologies including the *Best American Short Stories*, the *O. Henry Prize Stories*, and the Pushcart Prize anthology. Her fiction has been translated into twenty-nine languages, including Dutch, Hebrew, Indonesian, Bengali, Turkish and Japanese. Divakaruni began her writing career as a poet. Her two latest volumes of poetry are *Black Candle* and *Leaving Yuba City*. Divakaruni's first collection of stories *Arranged Marriage*, which won an American Book Award, a PEN Josephine Miles Award, and a Bay Area Book Reviewers Award, greatly increased her visibility on the literary horizon. Her major novels include *The Mistress of Spices*, *Sister of My*

*Heart, Queen of Dreams, One Amazing Thing, Palace of Illusions, Oleander Girl, Before We Visit the Goddess* and *The Forest of Enchantments*.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's novel *The Palace of Illusions* is a retelling of the Indian epic the *Mahabharata* from its character Draupadi's perspective, tracing her life from an "unexpected" (Divakaruni 1) birth to the war of Kurukshetra. Divakaruni also presents a stirring account of the interplay of warriors, gods, and the inscrutable laws of destiny, offering wisdom to today's world beset with the dangers of violence, war and destruction**.** Divakaruni's *The Forest of Enchantments* is a retelling of the Indian epic the *Ramayana* from its character Sita's perspective, placing her at the centre of a patriarchal world. The novel also narrates the stories of other women characters from the epic, namely Kaikeyi, Surpanakha, Mandodari, who are often misunderstood and relegated to the margins. Through the women characters depicted in the novel, Divakaruni raises pertinent questions regarding the plight of women in the contemporary time – How should a woman be treated both by her loved ones and the society as a whole?

Kavita Kané (1966- ) was born in Mumbai, but brought up in cities like Delhi, Patna and Pune. She graduated from the Fergusson College, Pune and completed her post-graduation both in English Literature and Mass Communication from the University of Pune. Although she wanted to be in the administrative services, she chose a career in journalism later because her ardent desire had been to be a writer. She worked for twenty years in various media houses - Magna Publications, *Daily News and Analysis* and *The Times of India*. After the success of her debut novel, *Karna's Wife*, she decided to become a full time author. The books of Kavita Kane have two elements in common — mythology and female characters. She focuses on the less known or silenced female characters in the epics and gives them voices, retelling their stories in a very impressive and effective manner suited to the contemporary scenario making the reader wonder if these characters really led a submissive life centuries ago in a faraway land.

*Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen* has been told from the perspective of Uruvi, Karna's wife. It unfolds against the backdrop of the epic struggle between the Pandavas and the Kauravas, and focuses more on the character of Karna, as seen from the point-of-view of Uruvi, than on Uruvi herself. This book is an exploration of the development of the character of Karna, one of the most

important character from the *Mahabharata*, through a series of trials and tribulations, leading to him becoming Daana Veera. *Sita's Sister*, another novel by Kavita Kané, draws attention to the character of Urmila, from the *Ramayana*, a woman of immense strength, whose husband Lakshman chose to accompany his brother Ram to the forest for fourteen years' exile. While Urmila could have insisted on accompanying her husband like Sita did, she chose to stay back in Ayodhya instead to fulfil her duties as a daughter-in-law of the household and govern the citizens of Ayodhya in the absence of their true leader. The novels of Kavita Kané focus on the struggle of different women characters, Uruvi and Urmila, placing them at the forefront.

Anand Neelakantan (1973- ) was born in a quaint little village called Thrippunithura, on the outskirts of Cochin, Kerala. Located east of mainland Ernakulam, across Vembanad Lake, this village has the distinction of being the seat of the Cochin royal family and is known for its hundred odd temples, the various classical artists it produced and its music school. Neelakantan remembers many evenings spent listening to the faint rhythm of *Chendas* (a cylindrical percussion instrument used widely in the states of Kerela, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka) emanating from the temples and the notes of the flute floating over the rugged walls of the school of music. Growing up in a village with more temples than was necessary, it was no wonder that the *Ramayana* fascinated him. However, he was drawn to the anti-hero of the epic, Ravana and to his people, the a*suras*. He wondered about their magical world, but his fascination remained dormant for many years, emerging only briefly to irritate his pious aunts during family gatherings. That was when Neelakantan came up with the idea of writing *Asura: The Tale of the Vanquished* and the *Ajaya* series comprising of two novels – *Ajaya I: Roll of the Dice* and *Ajaya II: Rise of Kali*.

*Asura: Tale of the Vanquished* is told from the perspective of the famous villain of the *Ramayana*, Ravana and his faithful follower Bhadra, both belonging to the Asura clan. This book attempts to highlight perspective of the vanquished as opposed to the version of the *Ramayana* that is quite popular. The *Ajaya* series is a retelling of the *Mahabharata* told from the Kauravas' perspective. In his note to the novel *Ajaya I: Roll of the Dice*, Neelakantan explains the reason for choosing to write from Duryodhana's perspective. The writer had visited a village in Kerala where the people regarded Duryodhana as a benevolent prince and celebrated a festival in his honour every year,

because they believed that Duryodhana had once visited their village and quenched his thirst by the toddy provided by an untouchable woman. Duryodhana, in return of the kindness shown to him by an old woman, constructed a temple with no idol in it. He gave surrounding villages to the temple, appointed an outcast as the priest and it is still believed that he answers the prayers of these villagers. This event prompted the author to conduct a research on the character of Duryodhana, generally regarded as a villain, and he came to the conclusion that Duryodhana was far from the scheming, roaring, arrogant villain of popular television serials and traditional retellings; instead, here was a brutally honest prince willing to fight for what he believed in. Beginning with a description of the childhood days of Pandavas and Kauravas, the *Ajaya* series focuses on the enthronement of Pandavas and the struggle of Kauravas who feel deprived of their birth right to be the rulers of Hastinapura. Duryodhana never believed his Pandava cousins to be of divine origin; and to modern minds, Pandavas' outlandish claim now sounds "chillingly similar to present-day political propaganda used to fool a gullible public" (Neelakantan 7).

Aditya Iyengar (1984- ) is an alumnus of St. Xavier's College, Mumbai, and started his career as a copywriter for Mudra Communications. He has donned several professional hats as a writer in the past including advertising copywriter, scriptwriter, and digital content creator at some of India's biggest media houses. Currently Iyengar is the senior marketing manager of History TV18, and is responsible for conceptualizing and executing campaigns and handling brand solutions for the channel. His novels, *The Thirteenth Day*, *Palace of Assassins*, *A Broken Sun*, *The Conqueror* and *Bhumika*, are known for talking about Indian mythological tales through the eyes of often unexplored and peripheral characters, with the aim of humanizing them, i.e., the mythical characters often undergo pain and suffering like human beings.

*The Thirteenth Day* is one such retelling of the *Mahabharata*, written from the perspective of characters like Yudhishthira, Radheya (Karna) and Abhimanyu – all essential characters from the epic. As the title suggests, this book narrates the events of the thirteenth day of the Kurukshetra War, that lead to the demise of Abhimanyu due to the *chakravyuh* formation. The Thirteenth Day focuses more on the fragile masculinity of the characters and settling of scores rather than the notion of dharma like the *Mahabharata* does. Another retelling, *Bhumika*, is narrated from the perspective of Sita, from the

*Ramayana*, and Bhumika, Sita's alter ego. Iyengar's aim behind creating this alter ego is to raise a pertinent question, something that even the original Sita from the *Ramayana* had asked – what if she hadn't loved and married Rama? What if she hadn't met Rama? The character of Bhumika, thus, exists as an independent queen of Mithila, and Rama being nothing more than an enemy of the state. *Bhumika* provides a fresh perspective on the choices often faced by women in their life, and that there is no right or wrong as long as the choice is theirs.

The four writers – Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Kavita Kané, Anand Neelakantan and Aditya Iyengar – belong to the same nationality and share a similar tradition of retelling timeless tales of divine origin. Several researchers have published articles and theses on the works of these authors individually. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is a well-known writer who has had several books written and published on her fiction and poetry. Mamta Agrawal has published a doctoral thesis titled "The Folkloric and Mythic Elements in the Novels of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni" that explores the representation of the female characters and the treatment of mythic elements in *The Palace of Illusions* and certain other novels. Some research papers are also available on the character of Draupadi like Dr. Ravi Khangai's "Beyond Polyandry: Exploring Draupadi's Desires in *The Palace of Illusions*" which explores the feelings of Draupadi towards Karna, the Pandavas and Krishna. Kavita Kané began her literary career in the year 2014, so her fiction is relatively new. Though there is no record of on-going or completed dissertations on the works of Kavita Kané, certain journal articles are available on some of her novels – "Urmila's Feminist Stance Against Patriarchy in *Sita's Sister*" by Ayuta Mohanty and Puspita Das, and "Revisiting the New Woman in Indian Mythology" by Ayuta Mohanty. Works of Divakaruni and Kané with the works of other feminist authors have also been studied in the book *Vision and Re-Vision: Revisiting Mythologies, Rethinking Women* written by Beena Gupta. This book explores the textual spaces provided to women, the marginalised voices and their resistance patterns.

Anand Neelakantan came up on the literary horizon in the year 2012 so research is still being carried out on his works. M. B. Ghogre is currently working on Neelakantan's fiction in the thesis titled "Narratives from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* in the Selected Novels of Anand Neelakantan: A Critical Study". Aditya Iyengar is a fairly upcoming novelist whose works are yet to be taken up for the purpose of literary research. However, being a social media enthusiast himself,

Iyengar has been involved with social media promotions and interviews ever since his debut novel was published in 2015.

This critical and comparative study of the selected works of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Kavita Kané, Anand Neelakantan and Aditya Iyengar, well-established names in the domain of retelling of myths, broadens the scope of research by way of analysis of different perspectives. Moreover, by taking up different myths the researcher does not intend to tell a story but make a critical exposition of the treatment of myths in the respective works. To restrict retellings to the original form of mythology is to overlook the functioning of the society with its rapidly changing socio-cultural, economic and political scenario. However, the values reflected in these myths hold perennial significance and can never be negated. Nonetheless, the reappropriation of myths by these contemporary Indian writers and how far are they justified in doing so is a matter of exploration. To the best of my knowledge and understanding, this kind of study has not been conducted by any other researcher till now, and a critical and comparative evaluation of these works will certainly open up new domain in the sphere of mythology as well as literature.

The objectives of the proposed dissertation are:

1. To explore the origin and use of myths in Indian literature in English, with special emphasis on Indian fiction in English.
2. To critically analyse the selected works of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Kavita Kané, Anand Neelakantan and Aditya Iyengar vis-à-vis their treatment of Indian myths.
3. To make a comparative study of the works of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Kavita Kané, Anand Neelakantan and Aditya Iyengar in the light of the treatment of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* in the selected works.
4. To make a critical evaluation of the contribution of these writers to the contemporary times.

Keeping in view the above objectives, the chapter scheme is as follows:

**Chapter 1**: Introduction

**Chapter 2**: Deconstruction of Patriarchy: A Critical Study of the Selected Works of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni

**Chapter 3**: Exploration of Sequestered Voices: A Critical Study of the Selected Works of Kavita Kané

**Chapter 4**: Subversion of Myth: A Critical Study of the Selected Works of Anand Neelakantan

**Chapter 5**: Revision of Myth: A Critical Study of the Selected Works of Aditya Iyengar

**Chapter 6**: Conclusion: Eternalising Myth

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